

Geosciences

"I look at the natural geological record, as a history of the world imperfectly kept, and written in a changing dialect; of this history we possess the last volume alone... Of this volume, only here and there a short chapter has been preserved; and of each page, only here and there a few lines." - On the Origin of Species

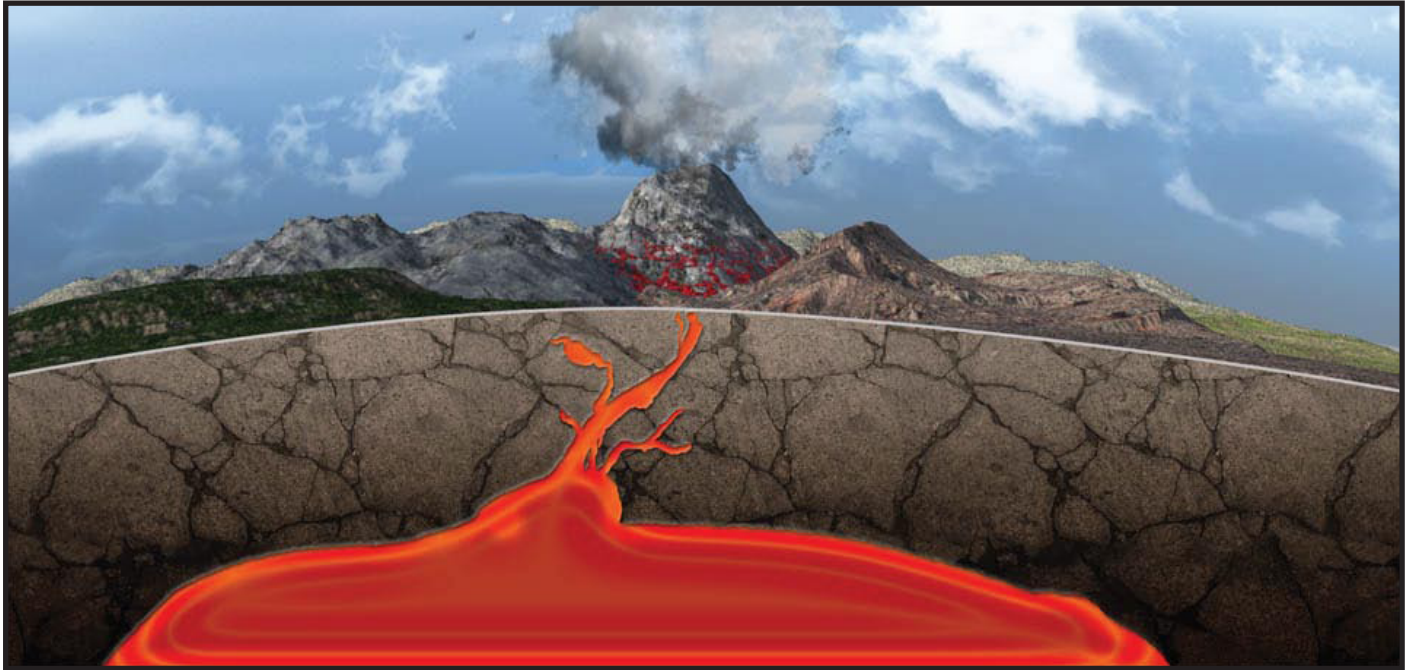


Illustration by Nicolle Rager Fuller, National Science Foundation

In 1859, Charles Darwin hit on the idea of natural selection to explain how organisms change over time, but the idea was not confined to biology. It swayed modern thinking about science that deals with the Earth as well. This was a likely outcome. Darwin's theory of evolution came from his work as a naturalist, one who advocates that the world--its mountains, oceans, rivers, plants and animals--can be understood in scientific terms. He wrote extensively about the Earth and its environments and theorized how they, coupled with the long expanse of time, contributed to change.